

Delhi's contribution to contemporary
Sanskrit Literature

Dr. Satya Vrat§

Sanskrit studies are being pursued with interest in different parts of India. So are they in Delhi whose contribution to the new Sanskrit literature in quality as well as quantity can well excite the admiration of every lover of literature. It covers a wide range of subjects and compares very favourably with the modern Sanskrit literature produced in other States. It may however, be pointed out here that Delhi cannot claim a distinct tradition of Sanskrit studies as many other States in India can. It has been a meeting place of scholars from different regions of the country whose profession brought them here and who made it their home and enriched its social and cultural life. In this respect it has an edge over other States and cities. The Sanskrit literature produced in Delhi is the handicraft of people of different linguistic and social groups with differing backgrounds. It, therefore, stands on a different footing as compared to the new Sanskrit literature produced in other areas.

From the following account a refreshing picture will emerge of the extent of new Sanskrit works produced in Delhi alone. This may well surprise many. Those of us who speak of Sanskrit as the dead language will have an occasion to wonder as to how a language which has ceased to be an effective medium could claim so many votaries who continue to ply their

§ Reader in Sanskrit, University of Delhi.

Residence - 3/54, Roop Nagar, Delhi-7.

pen faced though they are with innumerable hardships and difficulties. They pursue its study with dogged persistence and are ever in search of fields and pastures anew. It is worth-while, therefore, to take stock of contribution of the Sanskritists of Delhi to the growing Sanskrit literature.

One of the ablest of these Sanskritists is Mahāmahopādhyāya Pandit Chajju Ram Shastri Vidyāsāgara. His is a notable contribution to the different branches of Sanskrit literature. One of the earliest of his works was a Sanskrit kāvya in five Cantos: Sultānacaritam¹ on the life-history of King Mahīpala, son of Mahendrapāla of Chittor who was otherwise known as Suratāna which name popular pronunciation changed to Sultan. The work has been long out of print. Pandit Vidyāsāgara has also written a play Durgābhyudayam² in seven Acts. It has for its theme the Purāṇic story of the encounter of Goddess Durgā with demon Mahiṣa and his destruction at Her hands. A reputed logician, Navyanaiyāyika, Pandit Vidyāsāgara never allows the jargon of Navyanyāya to overpower him. His play is singularly free from any show of pedantry and recondite expressions and fully justifies his claim in the prologue:

karkaṣe tarkaviṣaye komale kāvyavastuni
samam līlāyate yasya Chajjūrāmasya bhārati.

Pandit Vidyāsāgara has also written the play Chajjūrāmāyaṇam which has for its theme the whole of the Rāma story. It has seven Acts like Durgābhyudayam but unlike it, it has not been published so far. Among his other publications

1. Published by the author, Dehra Dun, Sāmvat 1967.

2. Sumer Bros., Delhi, Second Edition, Sāmvat 2021.

mention may be made of Kurukṣetramāhātmyam¹, Karmakāṇḍa-paddhatiḥ² and Sāhityabinduḥ³, the last being a distinct contribution to Alankāra Śāstra. It has won Pandit Vidyāsāgara well-deserved recognition. In this the author's unique contribution lies in his selection of examples of the entire Doṣaprakaraṇa from the Naiṣadhīyacarita of Śrī Harṣa. This intellectual exploit he has indulged in in justification of the theory that the Naiṣadhīyacarita is the most defective as well as the most excellent of the Kāvyaś:

Kāvyaśya guṇadoṣāṇām ākaraḥ kathyate budhaiḥ
Naiṣadham tatra te 'smābhiḥ pradarśyante yathāmati⁴.

Pandit Vidyāsāgara's attempt is quite interesting and it is for this alone, if not for anything else, that the Sahityabinduḥ deserves serious notice. Pt. Vidyāsāgara has also written Sanskrit commentaries on some of the old texts like Mūlacandrikā on the Nyāyasiddhāntamuktāvalī⁵, Saralā on the Nyāyadarśana⁶, Sārabodhinī on the Vedāntasāra⁷, Parīkṣā on the first two Āhnikas of the Mahābhāṣya⁸, Sārabodhinī

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1. Published by the author, Delhi, Sāṃvat 2017.
 2. Published by the author, Delhi, Sāṃvat 2024.
 3. Meharchand Lacchmandass, Delhi, 1961.
 4. Sāhityabinduḥ, p.90.
 5. Published by the author, Varanasi, Sāṃvat 1981.
 6. Published by the author, Delhi, Sāṃvat 1990.
 7. Published by the author, Varanasi, Sāṃvat 1988.
 8. Meharchand Lacchmandass, Delhi, Sāṃvat 1999.

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on the five Adhyāyas of the Nirukta¹, Sādhana on the Laghusiddhāntakaumudī² and Parīkṣā or Vidyāsāgarī on the Kāvya prakāśa³. The latest of Pandit Vidyāsāgara's works is Vibudharatnāvalī, a history of Sanskrit literature in Sanskrit verse which seeks to refute many a well-known theory of Western scholars. A very good astrologer Pt. Vidyāsāgara has also written a valuable treatise: Pratyakṣajyautiṣam which still awaits publication.

Pt. Vidyāsāgara has been a source of inspiration to his pupils too one of whom Shri Om Prakash Shastri, son of a well-to-do Delhi businessman has only recently come out with a collection of his poems under the title: Bhāvalaharī⁴. The poems are couched in an elegant expression and are a fine portrayal of delicate human sentiments.

The next great name in the field of Sanskrit letters in Delhi is that of Pandit Charudeva Shastri to whom belongs the unique honour of being the first critical editor of the Vākyapadīya⁵. Shri Shastri is a prolific writer. His Sanskrit has a classical ring about it. He handles it with ease and facility. One of his earliest works is Śrīgāndhīcaritam⁶ which describes the life events of Gandhiji upto Salt Satyagraha. Written in mellifluous style its spontaneous verve charms the reader. Shri Shastri is

1. Meharchand Iacchmandass, Delhi, 1962.

2. Unpublished.

3. Unpublished.

4. Published by the author, Delhi, Sāmvat 2020.

5. Ram Lal Kapoor Trust Society, Lahore, Sāmvat 1991.

6. Published by the author, Lahore, Sāmvat 1987.

a grammarian of all-India reputation and is affectionately called Abhinava-Pāṇini by his admirers. His work the Śabdāpaśabdaviveka¹, (the discrimination between correct and incorrect words) is a unique contribution to the critical analysis of the Sanskrit language. In this work of about 300 pages he mentions some 500 such sentences as are grammatically justifiable but are not sustainable idiomatically. This chapter of the work is really superb. Among his other works mention here may be made of Prastāvatarāṅgi², a collection of Sanskrit essays written in chaste classical style, Anuvādakalā or Vāgyavahārādarśa³, a book on translation with 36 pages learned introduction dealing with some of the most important and controversial topics of Sanskrit usage and Vākyamuktāvalī⁴, a collection of choice sentences of Sanskrit, exuding charm and freshness all their own. Shri Shastri has a little over a score of research papers in Sanskrit to his credit. Only recently he has brought out the Hindi translation with exhaustive notes on the Navāhnikā portion of the Mahābhāṣya of Patañjali⁵. Some of his other works lying in the ms. form are the Vyākaraṇa-candrodaya and the Upasargārthacandrikā.

Pandit Prabhudatta Shastri, one of the oldest Sanskritists of Delhi, has written quite a few works in

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1. Bharatiya Sanskrit Bhawan, Jullundur City, Sāṃvat 2011.
 2. Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, Varanasi, 1950.
 3. Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, Second Edition, 1956.
 4. Bharatiya Sanskrit Bhawan, Jullundur City, Sāṃvat 2013.
 5. Hindi translation and comments on the first two Āhnikas he had already brought out in Sāṃvat 2019.

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Sanskrit all of which with the exception of one are very small in size but are nevertheless full of the patriotic sentiment. The bigger is Sanskṛtavāgvijaya¹, a play in five acts "which depicts the past greatness and the present sorry plight of the Sanskrit language." The play is peculiar in this that in it Hindi in place of Prakrit is employed. Pandit Prabhudatta Shastri is a well-known figure in the Kavi-sammelanas of Delhi.

Pandit Dina Nath Shastri Sārasvata has won national fame by the hundreds of articles that he has published in Sanskrit journals over the years. The total number of pages covered by his articles stands at the staggering figure of 10000. Shri Sārasvata is now busy bringing out Volume after Volume of the Hindi rendering of his magnum opus in Sanskrit: the Sanātanadharmālokaḥ.

Shastrārthamahārathi Pandit Madhavacharya is another great name in the field of letters in Delhi. He has so far written four Sanskrit works, the fourth one, Kathāśatakam being still under print. This work seeks to deal with 100 such characters of ancient India on whom not much has been written so far in Sanskrit. Among the other works of the Shastrārthamahārathi are: Tudesmr̥tiḥ² a satire on the west influenced Indian Society with a good sprinkling of English expressions, Kabīracaritam³ on the life and teachings of the well-known saint Kabir and Paratattvadigdarśanam⁴, a

1. Published by the author, Delhi, 1942.

2. Madhava Pustakakya, Dharma Dhama, Delhi, Second Edition, Saṁvat, 2007.

3. Madhava Pustakakya, Dharma Dhama, Delhi, Saṁvat 2009.

4. Madhava Pustakakya, Dharma Dhama, Delhi, Saṁvat 2020.

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discussion on the point as to who among the gods represents or represent the Supreme Essence (Paratattva). According to the Shastrārthamahārathi it is the One Being who is Real, all the gods represent that very One Being (Ekatattva). Hence no contradiction if each one of them is said to be Supreme Being (Paratattva) in older texts.

To the octogenarian Pandit Mukund Sharma goes the credit of giving us two compendia of materials from lexicons, their ṭīkāś as also commentaries on Sanskrit kāvyas and technical terms in vogue in the science of Astrology under the title Mukundakośa¹ (only the Lingānuśāsanavarga is printed so far) and Jyotiṣakośa² respectively.

Pandit Chudamani Shastri Shandilya, another octogenarian of Delhi has written a big volume on the history of Dharmaśāstra divided into eighteen sections out of which four have so far seen the light of the day. Pt. Shandilya has also written a short kāvyā Pañcavaṭīyam³. Out of the two cantos that it has it is only the first one that has been published so far.

Pandit Kedar Nath Sharma who retired from the service of the Archaeological Survey of India quite some time back has written an account of Mahenjo Daro and Harappa civilizations in excellent Sanskrit. Excerpts from his work have appeared from time to time in the Saṃskṛta Ratnākara of Delhi.

1. Published by the author, Delhi, 1962.

2. Published by the author, Delhi, 1967.

3. Published in the collection Saṃskṛtasudhā,

Atma Ram & Sons, Delhi, 1957.

Businessman by profession Pandit Gurudayalu Sharma takes to writing in Sanskrit as a hobby. He is at his best in humorous writings. His humour is very often pungent and incisive. He has written quite a few parodies and humorous skits. It is a pity that barring a few most of his poems have remained unpublished though they have provided many a moment of healthy recreation to Delhi audiences.

Shri A.R. Ratnaparakhi, an employee of the Rajya Sabha Secretariat, has brought out two valuable Sanskrit works: one, a collection of dialogues, Samvādamālā,¹ and the other a novel, Kusumalakṣmī.² both of which have won him well-deserved recognition. He writes easy Sanskrit prose with a good intermixture of English and vernacular expressions.

The late Pt. Indra Vidyāvācaspati, the noted critic, author and journalist has written a volume on the history of India under the title: Bhārataitihyam which is being published serially in the Gurukula Patrikā of Gurukul Kangri, Hardwar. It is the complete history of India in simple and easy Sanskrit verse from the beginnings to the late developments.

The University of Delhi has also contributed its humble bit to the growth of Sanskrit literature. Apart from the half a dozen theses in Sanskrit so far submitted to it for the Ph.D. degree a couple of its teachers have written quite a few original and creative works in Sanskrit.

1. Published by the author, Delhi, 1959.

2. Published by the author, Delhi, 1961.

